

Title: Vitamin A Capsule Distribution in Mali, National Nutrition Weeks: Reaching and Maintaining High VA Supplementation Coverage

Date: July 2005

Department : Health

Description: **A Promotional Strategy for Reaching and Maintaining High Vitamin A Supplementation Coverage in Mali: National Nutrition Weeks**

Keywords: Vitamin A, *Semaine d'Intensification des Activités de Nutrition (SIAN)*, National Nutrition Weeks, Partnership

Geographic area : National

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Content :

Vitamin A supplementation: Child mortality in Mali is one of the highest in the world with 238 children dying per 1,000 before their fifth birthday. Vitamin A supplementation (VAS) has been demonstrated to reduce child mortality as much as 23% when given to children 6 – 59 months old. USAID/Mali identified Vitamin A supplementation as one of the high impact services in its strategy to reduce child mortality in Mali.

From 1998 to 2002, Vitamin A (VA) capsule distribution was linked to National Immunization Days (NIDs). In 2000 for the first time, the Ministry of Health (MOH) with Helen Keller International/Micro Nutrient Initiative (HKI/MI) funding organized Regional Micronutrient Days in one region, Koulikoro. In 2001, five regions organized Regional Micronutrient Days (RMD). In June 2003, the MOH scaled up the RMD strategy and organized the first National Nutrition Weeks with USAID/UNICEF/HKI/MI. Since 1998 the activity has successfully transitioned from

being administered through NIDs to **Regional Micronutrient Days** to **National Nutrition Weeks** in 2004.¹

SIAN: The National Nutrition Weeks or la *Semaine d'Intensification des Activités de Nutrition (SIAN)* is a component of the National Strategy for Micro Nutrient Supplementation in Mali. The main partners of *SIAN* are USAID/Assistance Technique Nationale (USAID/ATN), UNICEF and HKI/MI.

The *SIAN* are organized twice yearly (every 6 months) and the approach is based on intensifying routine Vitamin A supplementation activities during a specific week and/or organizing campaigns (fixed points, door to door, etc.) adapted to the local situation.

Objectives of the *SIAN* are:

- ▣ Improve Vitamin A status of children (6 – 59 months) and post partum women through VA supplementation
- ▣ Raise awareness on Vitamin A Supplementation, breastfeeding and iodized salt consumption at household level

A central theme is selected for each *SIAN* and a series of regional micro planning workshops are organized in all regions of the country. *SIAN* communication sources vary according to geographic areas: diffusion TV/radio messages, public/traditional community mobilizers such as town criers, community health personnel, and administrative officers. Routine VA distribution in combination with promotional activities on other topics is carried out through community outreach by health personnel. Region specific activities can be added to selected themes.

¹ More recently, Vitamin A supplementation occurred with NIDs in February 2005 but the National Nutrition Weeks approach continues to be the major supplementation strategy of the Ministry of Health.

A national rapid coverage survey with USAID/ATN and HKI/MI financial and technical support has been organized after the April 2004 SIAN. National coverage according to parents was 83% in contrast with national coverage according to MOH is 96%. Given that the coverage target to achieve impact on child mortality is 80% it appears that the *SIAN* is reaching this objective.

SIAN allows for more flexibility and adaptation to regional needs because of decentralized management. Because of this each region can implement its own “customized version” of VA delivery. The transition process from NID-supported supplementation to the “*Semaine d’Intensification des Activités de Nutrition*” has challenges but these are manageable. Finally, *SIAN* has been a good strategy for strengthening nutrition partnerships and coordination throughout the country.



SIAN, March 2004



Vitamin A Capsule